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THOUGHTS

OF A

LINCOLNSHIRE FREEHOLDER

ON THE

LATE ADDRESS

OF

Sir GILBERT HEATHCOTE.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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OF

Sir GILBERT HEATHCOTE,

OF NORMANTON-PARK, IN THE COUNTY OF RUTLAND, BARONET,

TO THE

FREEHOLDERS

OF THE

COUNTY OF LINCOLN.

THE SECOND EDITION:

With Additions, including ſome admonitory Hints concerning the Rutland Election; the Boroughs of Grimſby, Boſton, Grantham, and Stamford; the Fens; the Thatched-Houſe Tavern, and the Lincolnſhire Club, &c.

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October, 1795.

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Sir GILBERT HEATHCOTE.

DISSOLUTIONS of Parliament ſometimes happen unexpectedly; and in the ſpace betwixt a Diſſolution and a General Election, the ſmall voice of *reaſon* is not heard very diſtinctly. I ſhall therefore endeavour to gain ſome attention to that voice, while there is

a chance that it may not be overpowered by the rattling of carriages during a canvaſs through the County. Accordingly, I ſhall place before my Brother-Freeholders the thoughts which occurred to me upon reading the firſt literary production of our young Candidate from Rutland.

This Addreſs appears to me little leſs ſurprifing, than it is confeſſedly premature*.

Beſides

* To the GENTLEMEN, CLERGY, and FREEHOLDERS of the County of LINCOLN.

GENTLEMEN,

AN addreſs from me, at the preſent period, may appear a little premature; but I feel it a pleaſant and an honourable duty, and incumbent upon me, to return my moſt reſpectful acknowledgments and ſincere thanks to very many friends, worthy Electors of the County

of

Beſides the *legal* qualifications for a Knight of a Shire, there are *three others* which I have been accuſtomed to look for, and in the Members for this County have always found; namely, an eſtabliſhed character for Independency, a competent knowledge of County buſineſs, and a reſidence within the County.

As

of Lincoln, for their partiality to me, and the cordial and unſolicited offers of their ſupport to place me in the diſtinguiſhed ſituation of a Repreſentative of the County in Parliament, upon the preſent vacancy.—But, as it might have hazarded the peace of the County, I am perſuaded I ſhall meet their approbation, in cheerfully ſacrificing my wiſhes to the preſervation of it; confidently truſting, that I may look forward and cheriſh the very flattering hope of their ſupport and renewed exertions in my favour at the next General Election; as I beg leave to intimate to the worthy Electors

As to the *firſt*: By *independency* I mean, a ſpirit which ſets a man above the fear of offending any one by a faithful diſcharge of his duty. I do not wiſh, that the Knight of a Shire ſhould ſhew his perverſe independency by conſtantly putting a drag-chain upon the wheels of Government. Neither do I forbid him,

of the County of Lincoln, and particularly to my numerous and reſpected friends, that it is my intention on that occaſion to make a tender of my ſervices, which ſhall ever be devoted to the intereſts of the County, and the ſupport of the Conſtitutional Laws of the Kingdom.

I have the honour to be,

With the greateſt deference and reſpect,

Gentlemen,

Your faithful and obedient humble ſervant,

GILBERT HEATHCOTE.

NORMANTON-PARK,
Auguſt 24th, 1794.

on

on the other hand, to look forward to a more elevated dignity, as the recompenſe of long and able ſervices to his country. Few men have ſtronger pretenſions to ſuch elevation, than faithful Knights of Shires. I require him only, not to ſacrifice his duty to ſuch views.

In ſome particulars, I would have him diſplay a ſpirit of independency even towards the Freeholders whom he repreſents. When they deſire any thing incompatible with the general good of the kingdom, as local intereſts ſometimes prompt men to do; then I would have him conſider himſelf as *a Member of Parliament*; as delegated, on account of his *eminent character* for wiſdom and integrity, to deliberate and determine for *his countrymen generally and equally*; for

thoſe who have no vote in any election whatever, and who have no *rational* cauſe of complaint on that ſcore, while Parliament continues to act, as it does, upon this comprehenſive principle.

I ſhould be ſorry, alſo, to ſee him courting the favour of Freeholders by an indiſcriminate *hoſpitality*; by ſuffering either his town-reſidence to be made a tavern, or his country-ſeat a victualling-houſe, to every impudent intruder that has a vote to give or with-hold from him. He may hear, at proper hours, what any of his electors or other neighbours have to ſay; and in this way he may gather, with caution, ſome uſeful truths;—though, after all, an intimate acquaintance with the County can alone guard him from being impoſed upon by intereſted

reſted information. But it is one thing, to hear what a man has to ſay; and another, to coax him with a notice and diſtinction to which he has no reaſonable pretenſions. Indeed, I diſlike the *coaxing* of Freeholders by any device whatever; even by ſubſcribing largely to ſupport the noble diverſion of *fox-hunting*.

Theſe are ſome of my expectations with regard to the independency of character in a County Member. But what can be ſaid of *any* young man of *twenty* *, in theſe reſpects, except that he has *no character at all?* He is about to form and eſtabliſh one; but his neareſt friends, even his Tutor, cannot pronounce with any aſ-

* It appears from the newſpaper account of the rejoicings at Normanton, on account of Sir G.'s *coming of age*, that the date of this auſpicious event is Oct. 4, 1794.

ſurance

ſurance what it will be. To the numerous Freeholders of this extenſive County Sir Gilbert's embryo-character muſt be generally unknown, whatever may be *prognoſticated* about it by the few Freeholders of Rutland. Indeed we know not in Lincolnſhire what conjectures even *they* have formed. The celebrated Mr. Brothers had lately ſome fellow-prophets in Rutland, not far from Wiſſendine, who are ſaid to have ſold their eſtates, and joined him in London, with a view to another *cruſade*; but I do not hear that they made any prognoſtications about the future character of Sir Gilbert. For my part, I have heard ſome things for, and nothing againſt him: "Tros, *Rutuluſve*, fuat;"—I will do him juſtice. The *perſonal ſervice* of himſelf and his family, in the internal defence of the kingdom,

is

is a matter of moſt juſt commendation *. It is not *Sir Gilbert Heathcote*, but it is *every man* of his ſhort ſtanding in the world, that ſeems to me to want the *firſt* qualification for repreſenting a County in Parliament.

With reſpect to the *ſecond*—a competent knowledge of County-buſineſs, or of any public buſineſs whatever—the tender years of Sir Gilbert render *many* remarks cruel and unneceſſary. But *one* is too important to be omitted. What ſort of a Repreſentative do we want, as well on other accounts, as particularly to forward our great works of *Drain-*

* Many Lincolnſhire Eſquires would have miſerably diſappointed the public expectation in this buſineſs, if they had not made amends for the *omiſſion* of *perſonal ſervice*, by a very rigid enquiry into the expenditure of their *ſubſcriptions*.

age;

age; which, after all that we have done, remain very imperfect? To what ſort of a man ſhould we look for aſſiſtance, in removing that ſcandal to the County, the horrible colle&tion of waters in the Fens on its *eaſtern* ſide, which at preſent yield us little elſe than peſtilential air, rotten ſheep, ſtarved geeſe, and ſtunted cattle—inſtead of grain and meat in a glorious abundance? Various contending claims will probably obſtruct the great work of apportioning theſe 40,000 acres. *Great men* (as uſual) will not be ſatisfied without *great ſhares* *. And whenever we enter

* I have heard (with pleaſure rather than ſurpriſe) that the principal claimants, the Duchy Court of Lancaſter and its Leſſee, would be ſatisfied with an equitable and reaſonable ſhare, far leſs than the County was once (perhaps inſidiouſly) taught to believe that they would demand.

upon

upon the buſineſs, we ſhall have many calls to make upon the patience, impartiality, diſintereſtedneſs, and *knowledge*, of our Repreſentatives in Parliament.

Now ſuppoſing this knowledge to be even as premature in Sir Gilbert, as the Addreſs which I am conſidering; yet we may expect that he is turning his mind towards *foreign travel*; in order, among other things, to improve his own Country by what he finds good, and to defend it from what he ſees bad in others. Happy as Engliſhmen are, if they knew their own happineſs, yet ſome hints might doubtleſs be gathered in other countries for our further improvement. And as to warnings againſt what is bad, Europe now preſents to us a harveſt of them moſt unfortunately abundant.

In caſe then of this peregrination; as a ſingle Member, however active, is preſumed to be inſufficient for this extenſive County, I foreſee the buſineſs of it left to a Steward; a very worthy man, as I hear, and of perſonal conſequence enough to be miſtaken by ſtrangers for his Principal; but not one, at whoſe levee the Gentlemen of the County, having buſineſs to conduct, would feel themſelves comfortable in attending. There is an old-faſhioned pride ſtill ſubſiſting among theſe men; which induces them to fancy, that they are not all of them utterly unequal to the tranſaction of the County-buſineſs, and that they have no occaſion to import either an Aſſiſtant, or a Deputy-Aſſiſtant, from any of the charitable Counties around them.

However, if nothing leſs than a

Shire

Shire can ſatisfy the ambition of our young Knight-*Errant*, might not *Rutland* be ſufficient for him at preſent? May he not hope for better ſucceſs there in his own perſon, when his preſent office of Sheriff ſhall be diſcharged, than he found for his Relation on the 26th of September, 1795?—that *glorious* day for the *independency* of Rutland; on which the Freeholders made a choice that has filled all the ſurrounding Counties with *admiration!* And might not *one* of the preſent Knights judiciouſly betake himſelf to ſome of the many Cities or Boroughs in the kingdom, which are apt to like a man the better for having never ſeen or heard of him before? Of this propenſity the City of Lincoln ſeldom fails to give a proof, once in ſeven years. The Boroughs of Grimſby

and Boſton, alſo, have ſhewn no great diſlike to novel faces; inſomuch that a man freſh imported from the Eaſt-Indies has had an excellent chance of ſucceſs in them. I believe, and hope, they are now more conſtant in their attachments. Grantham and Stamford indeed are prevented from diſtinguiſhing themſelves in this way, by the kind and *conſtitutional* care of the noble perſonages in their neighbourhoods.

The *third* qualification appears to me, on ſome accounts, even more indiſpenſable than the other two.

A Member for a *County* ſhould be an *inhabitant* of it *. *Here* it is that I make

* By Stat. 23 Hen. VI. c. 14. (and ſome other Statutes) this was a *neceſſary qualification*. Theſe were repealed by Stat. 14 Geo. III. c. 58. The propriety of this repeal, as to *Shires*,

I make my chief ſtand, in objecting to Sir Gilbert Heathcote. *Here* I invoke my Brother-Freeholders to conſult alike their honour and their quiet. Shall we confeſs that the County of Lincoln, which may be compared to a ſpacious and noble manſion, is unable to furniſh within itſelf two fit Repreſentatives in Parliament? And *muſt we* fetch one of them out of ſuch a mouſe-hole as Rutland? Forbid it all the feelings of Gentlemen, and of Men!

But, paſſing the matter of *Honour*; ſhall we ſuffer any neighbouring County to throw among us, once in every ſeven years, the fatal apple of

Shires, may well be doubted. And as to *Cities* and *Boroughs*, the *formal repeal* of the old Statutes was an important change in our *Conſtitution*. It laid them directly open to influence and intruſion from every quarter.

Diſcord? And ſhall we retain the bitter taſte of it, in ſhyneſſes, animoſities, and heart-burnings, till the ſame fatal ſeptennial gift is again preſented to us? Let us vehemently ſay "No: The Knights of our Shire ſhall, both of them, have their principal manſions, and chief reſidence, *bonâ fide*, within it. If either of them lives an inch beyond *the line*, he may as well live in the fartheſt part of the kingdom. Without ſuch a rule as this, our peace will be continually diſturbed by our opulent Borderers. It is no matter where his *property* lies: we are to be repreſented by, and communicate with, *him*, and not his *acres*. We will have the *man himſelf* among us. And we will not be dragged out of our own County, to confer with our Members on the buſineſs of it, except to London during

the Seſſion of Parliament. *There* indeed we ſhall rejoice to hear of their diligent attending; and ſhall account them as well engaged, as in running down all the foxes, ſlaughtering the birds, or advertiſing, menacing, and bringing to *juſtice*, all the *unqualified raſcals* in the County."

But now, quitting heroics and the *plural* number, let me aſk, If *one* of our Members may live in *Rutland*, why is this excluſive privilege, of deſerting us, aſſigned to *him*?—And why may not the other claim our conſent to live in any of the contiguous Counties, of York, Nottingham, Leiceſter, Northampton, or Cambridge? In which caſe, I cannot forbear to paint to myſelf the looks, and to imagine the feelings, of our old Lincolnſhire families,

when they drink after dinner (as is uſual in Clubs) *to the health of our abſent Members.*

When I expreſs ſo much ſatisfaction at the reſidence of our Knights in London, I muſt be ſuppoſed to ſpeak of it only as implying an attendance on their important duties in *Parliament.* It would give me *no* pleaſure to hear of their frequent meetings at the Thatched-Houſe Tavern;—of taking the *ſenſe of the County* at a *Lincolnſhire Club*; which, however perſonally reſpectable, has not yet received a deputation to judge of all county matters for thoſe who reſide conſtantly upon their eſtates in the country. We have a *Shire-Hall* (though as a ſtructure it does us no great credit), in which any extraordinary public buſineſs can be tranſacted, and eſpecially *County Elections* can be

ſettled,

ſettled, with more general convenience and ſatisfaction than in the faireſt building in London.

With regard to the *wording* of this notable Addreſs, ſome remarks are ſufficiently obvious. I do not mean to queſtion either the elegance or the critical exactneſs of its ſtyle. In Knights of Shires we look to more important things than theſe. They are diſpenſed with, in theſe perſonages, in all parts of the kingdom; as the *Advertiſements* before and after a General Election never fail to teſtify. The Agents on theſe occaſions are oftener men of buſineſs than of letters. The *Chaplain* is engaged perhaps in keeping the voters in good humour; he cannot always be at hand; and poſſibly might be ſo in vain.

But let me aſk, Was it likely, on the laſt occaſion, that we ſhould elect

a gentleman, whoſe unripe years incapacitated him from voting or ſitting in the Houſe of Commons? And if the ſtatute 7 and 8 W. c. 25.* remains unrepealed, I believe this was actually the caſe with Sir Gilbert. The Election was *Sept.* 18, 1794. He came of age on or about *Oct.* 4, 1794. Now, though we are contented, and have always been, as far as my memory extends, without

* "No perſon hereafter ſhall be *capable of* "*being elected* a Member to ſerve in this, or "*any future* Parliament, who is not of the age "of one-and-twenty years: and every election "or return of any perſon under that age is "hereby declared to be *null and void*: and if "any ſuch Member hereafter choſen ſhall "*preſume to ſit or vote* in Parliament, he ſhall "incur ſuch penalties and forfeitures as if he "had preſumed to ſit and vote in Parliament "without being choſen or returned." 7 and 8 W. c. 25. ſ. 8.

eloquent Repreſentatives, and perhaps are as well without them; yet we ſhould hardly chooſe to have them abſolutely *dumb*, that is, incapable of voting; and not only dumb, but *deaf* too; or, which is the ſame thing, excluded from hearing the deliberations of Parliament; except by an indulgence—in a ſituation which they muſt *beg* to be admitted to—not very conſiſtent with their dignity—in a *gallery*—among the multitude.

If we certainly ſhould not have elected ſuch a Repreſentative, then Sir Gilbert's *ſacrifice* to the peace of the County was not a *ſubſtantial* ſacrifice, but merely ſmoke and vapour.

But if he *was*, on the day of Election, qualified to ſit and vote, why did he not urge his pretenſions *then*, rather

rather than poſtpone them to the *General* Election? When there was an actual vacancy in the repreſentation, no man could be juſtly accuſed of diſturbing the peace of the County, who had made a tender to it of his faithful ſervices. It was then open to all; and with much reaſon would the Freeholders have thanked any man of character, ability, and property, uſually reſiding among them, who would have undertaken to ſerve them without any improper views, either of intereſt or ambition.

Whatever *ſincerity* there was in theſe profeſſions about the peace of the County, there was undoubtedly a *diſcretion* beyond the years of Sir Gilbert. For it was very unlikely, that the Freeholders in the northern diviſion of this County would conſent to have one Member whoſe re-

ſidence

ſidence is near its ſouthern extremity, and another whoſe reſidence was not within it all. Neither would he have found it very eaſy, to reſiſt ſucceſsfully his *Competitor* on that occaſion; whoſe venerable Father would probably have diſplayed in his behalf ſome of that honeſt energy and vehemence with which nature has ſo liberally endowed him.

But now, what is to become of this *precious* peace at the approaching General Election? Has our Member in the *four* laſt Parliaments declared his intention of retiring? or have the Freeholders expreſſed their wiſh that he would do ſo? I reſide conſtantly in Lincolnſhire, and have heard neither of theſe things. Are we to have that moſt undeſirable of all conteſts, a conteſt of purſes? I truſt there is too much ſpirit in this

County

County to ſuffer an old and tried Friend to be elbowed out of his place by the overpowering fortune of a young, untried, and ſomewhat forward Acquaintance.

The County was, a few years ſince, ſufficiently ſupine in all public concerns; inſomuch that the King, on receiving an Addreſs from it, upon ſome of the late occaſions, is ſaid to have pleaſantly obſerved to his attendants, that he had forgot that Lincolnſhire was a part of his dominions. But there ſeems to have been lately a conſiderable portion of life and vigour infuſed into it. I could ſay from what quarter it has probably proceeded; but I am no more the flatterer than the traducer of any man. Our Gentry begin to be known in the reſt of England; and I hope they will be known as ſtrenuous aſ-

ſertors

ſertors of their independence, and as having men *among* them well qualified to conduct their Parliamentary concerns.

For, if we muſt deal capriciouſly with our old Member, are there not men reſident in the County, fit Candidates for our favour? I do not intimate who they are; becauſe I write not to ſerve the purpoſe of any man. But of ſeveral it may doubtleſs be ſaid moſt truly, that they maintain in their own perſons that revered character, which their families have ſupported during many generations.

Upon the whole, this Addreſs appears to me inconſiderate, indecorous, and preſumptuous; and if the ſpirit of Lincolnſhire be not ſunk paſt all recovery, I truſt the Addreſs will produce an effect juſt oppoſite to

that

that which was intended, by uniting the Freeholders in a general reſiſtance to this unneceſſary, unwarrantable, and unprecedented intruſion.

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